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COMMUNITY
MEDIA REVIEW

Disability and American Media



Donna Yeager (right) in studio with her father Don (left), mother Jeanne, and Director Rich Martinez.

The Unique Role of **Access**

The Journal of the
Alliance for Community Media

Volume 19, No. 1

Get in touch with your community

with the

Interactive Video Bulletin Board

THE CHANNEL THAT TAKES REQUESTS:

- Lets viewers choose what they see.
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*-David Vogel, General Manager,
Community Television of Knoxville*

"Since placing the system in service, we have seen a community response that now exceeds 18,000 inquiries per month. The Interactive Video Bulletin Board has become an integral part of our community service program"

*- Ian N. Wheeler, Executive Director,
Fairfax Cable Access Corporation*

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*- Lynn Carillo-Cruz, Former Executive Director,
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*- Barbara Popovic, Executive Director,
Chicago Access Corporation*

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In this Issue

Working for the Common Good by Alan Bushong	4
<i>Alliance Chair addresses disability and media</i>	
New Full Time Directors	4
<i>Alliance announces two new full-time positions at national office</i>	
Alliance Receives \$80,000 from MacArthur Foundation	5
<i>Press Release details Community Coalition Initiative plan</i>	
The Fight Against Censorship by Alan Bushong and Jim Horwood	6
<i>Alliance takes its case to the Supreme Court</i>	
Editorial Opportunities	23
<i>Openings on the Alliance Editorial Board</i>	

Disability and American Media: The Unique Role of Access

Disability and American Media: The Unique Role of Access by Howard Davis and Vel Wiley	7
<i>Co-Editors-in-Chief introduce the theme of this CMR</i>	
American Television and the Demographics of Disability by Howard Davis	8
<i>Why access is vital to the disabled community</i>	
On the Move with Donna Yeager by Don Yeager	9
<i>Sharing the vision of expanded opportunities for disabled people</i>	
Talking with the Host	9
<i>Howard Davis interviews On the Move host Donna Yeager</i>	
Shedding Light on Post Polio Syndrome by Paula Manley	10
<i>Easter Seals Ability Hour</i>	
...And Still Climbing by Howard Davis	11
<i>Opening horizons through public access</i>	
My Access Produces My Story by Robert E. Shoults	12
<i>Finding life's work in access</i>	
Bridges by Sandee Brooke	12
<i>Seven years on the air</i>	
I CAN, YOU CAN by Anna Herr	13
<i>How access changed a life</i>	
Eye Understand by Dr. Jerry Seale	16
<i>Involving the deaf community</i>	
The Kiss My TV Show by Larry Alanis	18
<i>Project VITAL opens the door to media access</i>	

Cover design by Jim Peters; cover photo courtesy On the Move

From the Chair

Working for the Common Good

by Alan Bushong

Perhaps no group of people is in greater need of the ability for self-representation than the communities generally referred to as "disabled." Portrayals in the commercial media are infrequent; self-representation is outright rare. I'm reminded of a Seattle-based performing group called **Tickle Tune Typhoon**. Through their music, this group provides a great insight with a simple phrase:

everyone is *differently abled*. Disability is in the eye of the beholder. How often have you heard that viewpoint?

The **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** was crafted both from a sense of fairness to all taxpayers and from the a sense that our acts need to serve the common good as well as individual interests. Yes, there is a cost to providing services to the mobility, sight and hearing impaired. The cost probably does anger those more concerned with balance sheets than in social interaction. However, the benefits to society at large of inclusion rather than exclusion was seen as outweighing the short-term monetary cost.

I anticipate increasingly greater attempts to dismantle the ADA. The attempts will probably be indirect; no one will want to openly state opposition to ADA. Instead, government services and public institutions will be privatized; federal laws, including ADA, will be undermined.

Three disturbing trends point in this direction: defining human beings as consumers; flirting with situational ethics; and embracing selfishness.

People are increasingly being considered purchasing/consuming units. Discussion of the Information Superhighway and Advanced TV provides examples close to home. Commerce dominates dialogue which includes just two types of beings: *corporate service providers* and *consumers*. With the exception of the **Alliance** and a few public interest groups, there is no discussion of public discourse

and community-building uses of media.

Situational ethics erodes distinctions between fairness and lack of fairness, between right and wrong. In a

warped and selfish way, people rationalize that it's okay to bend the rules when self-interest is extremely high. Codes of ethics were established in recognition that rules must apply *first and foremost* when self-interest is present.

Finally, people

are being encouraged to look inward, toward personal gain versus the common good. As jobs with decent pay decrease, people are placed in greater competition with each other. Commercial media invite worship of individual athletes, of isolated political and military leaders, and of solo performing artists. Company

pensions and even Social Security are under attack in favor of Individual Retirement Accounts. Impersonal home shopping

via TV and credit cards challenges a thoughtful approach to local shopping, complete with personal accountability by both merchant and purchaser.

Life is more than commerce. Surely we have more to show for a five billion year old planet than our ability to sell people stuff they do not need.

If we are motivated by a basic sense of fairness, we will balance our individual needs with work for the common good. And that work requires an opportunity for all people, regardless of ability, to speak

for themselves.

Alan Bushong is Chair of the Alliance for Community Media.



Alan Bushong

"Surely we have more to show for a five billion year old planet than our ability to sell people stuff they do not need."

The Alliance on the Move New Full Time Directors

In a move designed to improve member services, **Executive Director Barry**

the last eight years with the **American Psychiatric Association**.

Forbes has hired two additional full-time staff members. As of December 18, **Wanda Sheridan** joined the staff as **Conference Director** and will manage both the **International Conference and Trade Show** and the **Hometown Video Festival**. As of January 1, **Jeffrey Hops** became the full-time **Government Relations Director**.

Wanda has fifteen years of experience in project, meeting, and conference management. A native Washingtonian (DC, that is), Wanda has spent

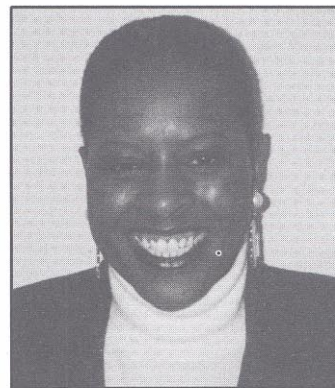


Photo by Jim Peters

New Alliance Conference Director Wanda Sheridan

No stranger to **Alliance** members, **Jeff Hops** has provided government relations services to the Alliance on a contract basis for over the past year. Before that time, he put his law degree to work on the staff of **U.S. Representative Jerrold Nadler (D-NY)**.

The addition of these two staff members has forced the Alliance to move into a larger office space. The good news is that the address, the telephone numbers, and even the suite number will remain

the same! The National Office was fortunate enough to move into the suite

See Alliance, page 20...

Community Coalition Initiative

Alliance Receives \$80,000 from MacArthur Foundation

The following is text from an Alliance for Community Media press release.

Washington DC — The Alliance for Community Media announced today that it has received a two-year operational grant of \$80,000 from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, based in Chicago, Illinois. Although unrestricted in nature, the grant will allow the Alliance to launch a new "Community Coalition Initiative" which will build a coalition of national civic organizations which serve youth, minorities, and other disenfranchised communities; connect local chapters of these national organizations to current community media organizations; assist local chapters and individuals to improve community media services or create these services where none exist; and educate these local and national coalition partners in telecommunications public policy as it affects the public interest.

More specifically, the grant will allow the Alliance to produce a video program and companion booklet to distribute to local and national organizations with an interest in developing programming through local community centers, provide speakers at national conferences and at local town meetings to encourage involvement in community media, create a network of program producers and community media centers, provide technical assistance for community media start-up groups, and keep community media advocates informed of important legislative and regulatory developments.

"This grant to the Alliance is particularly important since the support for a diversity of voices and viewpoints in television, radio, and other media is under attack," said Barry Forbes, Executive Director of the Alliance. "In the past few years, media production centers and distribution 'gatekeepers' have become fewer, larger, and more controlling of content. More recently, Congress has moved to decrease and perhaps eventually eliminate funding for diversity through the

Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Congress is also determined to eliminate telecommunications regulations which promote a diversity of media ownership and access. The Alliance's Community Coalition Initiative will strive to reassert diverse voices and viewpoints at the community level by creating local and national coalitions."

Over the past two years, the Alliance has achieved success in mobilizing grassroots support and advancing public policy issues. For example:

- According to the Civic Media Project and People for the American Way, the Alliance generated about 80% of the grassroots support for public interest provisions in the telecommunications legislation in 1994;
- In 1995, the Alliance was the only public interest organization to get any supportive provisions in the telecommunications bills, HR 1555 and S 652; and
- The Alliance is challenging censorship provisions in the Cable Act of 1992 in the case *Alliance for Community Media, et al. v. FCC*, which will be heard before the Supreme Court on February 21, 1996.

"We're proud that Alliance members and constituents helped to lead the public interest community's charge for public space as Congress has considered landmark telecommunications legislation in 1994 and 1995," said Alan Bushong, Chair of the Alliance and Executive Director of Capital Community Television in Salem, Oregon. "The MacArthur grant now gives the Alliance the opportunity to extend development of media access to many communities which until now have been underrepresented or totally excluded."

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grantmaking institution dedicated to helping groups and individuals

to improve the human condition. The Foundation makes grants through Foundation-wide initiatives and through eight specific programs. The Foundation was created in 1978 by John D. MacArthur (1897-1978), who developed and owned an array of businesses—principally Bankers Life and Casualty Company—as well as considerable property in Florida and New York. His wife Catherine (1909-1981) held positions in many of these companies and served as a director of the Foundation.

Founded in 1976, the Alliance for Community Media is a national, non-profit membership organization committed to assuring everyone's access to electronic media. The Alliance accomplishes this by disseminating public information, advancing a positive legislative and regulatory environment, and supporting local organizing. The Alliance represents the interests of an estimated 1.5 million community, religious and charitable groups and individuals who use public, educational, and government ("PEG") access channels and facilities to speak to their communities. The Alliance also serves the interests of over 950 PEG access organizations and local origination cable services throughout the country. The Alliance's 1996 International Conference and Trade Show will be held in the Washington, DC area on July 17-20, 1996, and is expected to attract over 800 participants. The conference will include the Awards Ceremony for the 1996 Hometown Video Festival, the largest and oldest video competition which showcases community media.

"This grant to the Alliance is particularly important since the support for a diversity of voices and viewpoints in television, radio, and other media is under attack..."

Public Policy

The Fight Against Censorship



October 1992

Congress passes the 1992 Cable Act, including Section 10, which calls for FCC rules to prohibit indecent access programming or material promoting unlawful conduct, and which makes the cable companies liable for such programming.

December 1992

The FCC begins process to develop rules to comply with the Cable Act. The Alliance responds together with other public interest groups, stating that lock boxes provide the only constitutionally-sound method to block unwanted programming from the home.

The Washington D.C.-based law firm of Shea & Gardner provides pro bono representation of the public interest groups with attorney Mike Greenberger taking the lead.

February 1993

The FCC issues rules requiring cable companies to censor leased access or create a separate "indecent" channel available by request only.

April 1993

The FCC issues rules allowing cable operator censorship of public access channels.

May 1993

The Alliance for Community Media joins several other

By Alan Bushong and Jim Horwood

On Monday, November 13, 1995, the **United States Supreme Court** agreed to hear the appeal of the June 6 decision of a federal court of appeals to allow cable companies to censor access channels. The **Alliance for Community Media** continues to head up a coalition of public interest groups fighting this action, and the Washington D.C.-based law firm of **Shea & Gardner** continues to represent us.

The court case: it's about the Alliance's mission. Since 1976, the Alliance has worked to open telecommunications media to the diversity of voices required for a healthy democracy. The purpose of the Alliance is to ensure access to electronic media and to promote effective communication through community uses of media.

We assert that people have the inalienable and basic human right of communication and the simple dignity to speak for themselves.

We agree with cable companies that they should have no liability for the content of programming on access channels; we believe that those channels are a public forum and that no one should have the right to interfere with programming on those channels.

What's at stake? Censorship by cable companies is not imagined, especially if the companies are financially liable for access programs. Note the following actions taken with the censorship rules not in effect.

In San Francisco: A cable company general manager said he did not want to televise any access program which his kids could not watch. (*Editor's note: get ready to shut down your cable system—access channels are not the problem!!*)

In Tucson: The cable company ordered a ban on live programming and ordered all tapes to be shipped to California for review.

What might be censored? U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit **Judge Patricia Wald** stated, in her dissent from the majority opinion upholding the censorship rules, that "affected speech could include programs on the AIDS epidemic, abortion, childbirth or practically any aspect of human sexuality."

Even the Hometown award-winning program on self-examination for breast cancer might fall to the censor's ax/bulk eraser!!

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. As **Mike Greenberger**, lead attorney for Shea & Gardner in this court case, said at the Alliance conference in Boston, we who work in the public interest are running a marathon.

Help the Alliance protect our freedoms!! Help us raise the out-of-pocket costs for this case. **Pledge now!**

Alan Bushong is Chair of the Alliance for Community Media, and Chair of the Public Policy Committee as well. Attorney Jim Horwood is Legal Affairs Appointee to the Alliance Board of Directors.

public interest groups in filing suit against the FCC rules in federal court, and gains court action to block implementation of the rules.

November 1993

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C.

Circuit rules in favor of the Alliance, finding both Section 10 of the Cable Act and the resulting FCC censorship rules unconstitutional.

October 1994

In response to a government request, the full 11-member panel of U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit rehears the case.

June 1995

The full Appeals Court votes largely along party lines in overturning the findings of the three judge panel, finding the

Cable Act and the FCC censorship rules constitutional.

July 1995

The Court agrees to maintain the stay of implementation of the rules, pending a decision by the Supreme Court on whether to hear the case.

November 1995

The Supreme Court agrees to hear the case, and the stay continues.

February 21, 1996

Oral arguments will be presented to the Supreme Court.

June 1996

The Supreme Court will issue a decision.

From the Editors

Disability and American Media: The Unique Role of Access

by Howard Davis and Vel Wiley

In this issue of *CMR*, we look at television and disability in America. Community access provides a unique voice for—and by—the great diversity of individuals in the disabled community, as you will appreciate in our fascinating group of articles.

Why is access one of the greatest potential providers of television information and inspiration for the huge community of people with a disability in America?

Find out in the lead article *American Television and the Demographics of Disability*. In terms of media coverage, airtime, and range of content, commercial and public television vastly underrepresent—and misrepresent—this country's disabled community. We don't often consider that the disabled among us vastly outnumber our largest racial minorities, and cut across all religious, ethnic, and economic groups in America. The huge population of disabled Americans is not only the largest, but has historically been our most silent and silenced minority.

But far from bad news, community television producers across the country are learning about the potential of access to express the progress, stories, and potential for the disabled community. As access administrators, cable executives, producers and government officials who read *CMR*, we should be aware of the benefits of encouraging and "growing" the programs and their producers who speak for the disabled.

CMR introduces you to several producers in articles about their work. Some are disabled themselves. Others tell cameo stories about disability and the transforming empowerment of

producing for access.

Don Yeager tells about a crew of 125 volunteers, most disabled, in the San Francisco Bay area's *On the Move* series in the article *On the Move with Donna Yeager*. *On the Move*'s seven-year run has won numerous honors for its programs and

paraplegic host, **Donna Yeager**.

Donna describes her experiences with community television in the *CMR* interview

Talking with the Host.

Easter Seals Ability Hour is produced by **Sheila Maxwell**. Sheila was a teenage championship figure skater when polio struck. Portland, Oregon area's **Tualatin Valley Community Access** Executive Director **Paula Manley** writes about Sheila's productions, advocacy, and the growing impact of her five years of access television.

Eye Understand explains the deaf communities' use of public access. Written by **Dr. Jerry Seale**, this article discusses the surprising ways the deaf are enlarging deaf use of the medium of television.

Larry Alanis is disabled and learned production through **Project VITAL**, a department of the **Little City Foundation**, which established a community of people with developmental disabilities. He writes his story in *The Kiss My TV Show*.

I Can, You Can is an essay by **Anna Herr**, a learning disabled producer at **Milwaukee Access Telecommunications Authority**. Anna tells about how access producing has stimulated her to new horizons of learning.

Howard Davis is a minister in Portland, Oregon who won a presti-

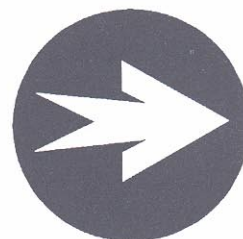
gious national **American Film Institute** award for documentary television as a result of his documentary, *...And Still Climbing*, produced at access about his son's autism. He shows how he is still climbing as a producer of good television as a result of his work on disability.

A disabled producer at **Tucson Access** in Tucson, Arizona, **Robert Shoults** explains how being a producer at access changed his professional career and personal life. *My Access Produces My Story* tells this inspiring example of what can—and does—happen to disabled people when they are given equal opportunities in an unequal world.

Sandee Brooke has a weekly access series talk program *Bridges* in Tucson, Arizona. Her son is Robert Shoults, author of the story mentioned in the previous paragraph. Sandee explains in her article about the history of this important show and its significant seven-year impact on the community—from medical information and legislation for the disabled to public works which benefit the disabled in their cablecast area.

Enjoy, be inspired, and then help enable us hear more about—and by—this important part of the community. Of course, as you are all able.

Howard Davis and Vel Wiley are Co-Editors-in-Chief of this issue of Community Media Review.



American Television and the Demographics of Disability

by Howard Davis

Disability is a mainstream American experience, like Mom and apple pie. But its reality and presentation in mainstream American television are often two different universes.

The commercial and public television media treats the "handicapped" as a source of curiosity, of dramatic relief from the "normal" world, or an item of interest during political discussion of the social safety net. The realities, however, of the American disabled stretch far beyond these media uses.

And instead of a proportionate amount of air time relating to this 20 percent of the American population, disability and the disabled get considerably less than one percent of media time.

Why?

The answer is simple. America's mainstream media is disabled in its capacity to tell media stories which express the joys and pains, the realities and potentials of the disabled. The scale and scope, the existential dimensions of life for America's disabled are almost invisible in our television-saturated culture.

We cannot exclusively blame commercial or public TV. The industry only reflects the anti-disability bias of our entire media. For instance, when New York City refused to install public toilets for the disabled at the moment the **Americans with Disabilities Act** was being implemented nationwide, they used the reasoning that city officials feared public toilets for the disabled may be used by the homeless or junkies. A *Wall Street Journal* editorial condemned disabled complainers for narrow self-interest and said it was simply an issue of "weighing civil rights against common sense."

What the blind cannot see and the deaf cannot hear, they cannot understand or explain. That's American media's disability.

The Handicapped Mainstream Media. This most invisible minority is pervasively

among us. It knows no economic, social, color, sex, religious or age boundaries. And because most of us turn our heads toward the media-hyped super "normal-noids" of Hollywood's image of reality, we wind up turning our heads away from

America's underclass

of the mentally and physically disabled.

Oh, we know that they are there.

Like we know we have kidneys, lungs, and heart. They are inside our American life. But we don't look at them much—if ever. And in our mainstream television, the disabled are never followed very long.

Almost never is the face of disability presented from the point of view of those who live it. Or live with it—like the scores of millions in our families of the disabled. Beyond the more than 35 to 50 million Americans that are officially disabled at any time, their relatives and friends constitute another enormous group underrepresented in media.

The lack of serious attention in media for such a huge population of Americans is remarkably unreal. It is possible that historically and psychologically, these persons most invisible to the mainstream media actually constitute the largest underprivileged class in America—below the lowest ethnic group in job opportunities, social status, and life fulfillment opportunities. And yet the true story is that these "special" Americans are an undiscovered treasure to our media, our culture and even economic potential.

Enormous Scale and Diversity. Who are the disabled ignored in America's teleculture? And what motivates them?

You may find out because you could join their ranks at any time. "Live long enough, and all the abled become disabled," said one expert, herself disabled later in life. An increasing number of

disabled now joke about the smugness of what they call "the temporarily abled," those of us who may think of ourselves as "normal."

A 1994 census report counted 49 million disabled Americans. But it's difficult to estimate how many disabled we have among us because different folks have different definitions. Most researchers use the limitations to normal life to define the boundary between the abled and disabled population. Others seek a much broader definition to include any disease or chronic health condition. In these looser terms, 120 million Americans live with personal disability—over a third of us. Since disability catches up with us as we age, no one is far from its reaches.

The critically acclaimed book which best summarizes America's disabled population is **NO PITY** by Joseph Shapiro, published in 1994. Shapiro says "there are some 30 million African-Americans. So, even at the lowest estimate, disabled people could be considered the nation's largest minority."

Disabilities claim enormous economic resources. In 1990, federal and state governments spent \$60 billion on checks for disabled people. If all the costs were added up, disability directly costs the U.S. economy \$170 billion. If you added the lost employment and productivity of these persons, the figure would be much higher.

Some disabled don't want to talk about how many there are, because they believe it's pointless. It's easy to understand why. Like all of us, disabled persons resist being pigeonholed. A woman with a severe disability put her feelings on the line about being

placed in a category this way: "Don't keep trying to count us. We are here, you can see most of us if you look."

America's mainstream television chooses not to look. While some disabled activists believe that the disabled community is so extensive and diverse it is

See *American Television*, page 14...

"Who are the disabled ignored in America's teleculture? And what motivates them?"

"...the true story is that these 'special' Americans are an undiscovered treasure to our media..."

Living Her Vision

On the Move with Donna Yeager

by Don Yeager

In her early twenties, our daughter **Donna Yeager** realized that television was the only way to share her vision of expanded opportunities for disabled people.

In many ways Donna's life was a prelude to helping the disabled through the medium of television. Now every year her very successful cable access program *On the Move* multiplies the effects of her original vision.

Cablecast on most cable franchises in the San Francisco Bay area, *On the Move* has been regularly featured on the **Community College Satellite Network** and is a weekly series on the San Jose PBS

station, **KTEH**, broadcast channel 54. Now other regions are interested in carrying the program; **Manhattan Neighborhood Network** in New York City cablecasts the series.

From Disability to Access. It was Donna's own life with disability that made it possible for her to host such compelling television. Her drive to help others springs from her own life struggles.

Donna is a quadruple congenital amputee. She was born with no arms at all. Her knees are attached at the hips causing her legs to be short.

In the navy, my wife **Jeanne** and I struggled to keep her development experiences in an environment where everyone was treated similarly. She completed high school, though she could not write with her hands. She has no hands. But she learned to write with her toes before her tenth birthday. Later, she learned to type with her toes.

While she was in her first year of college, Donna was associated with the **Disabled Students Union**, an advocacy group for disabled student rights. The wholesome atmosphere and supportive nature of the faculty and administration led Donna to seek some vehicle to enable her to tell more accurately the scope, nature, and accomplishments of the



Photo courtesy On the Move.

On the Move board members and guides pose with Donna Yeager (third from right) during the 1993 Wotobashi International Music Festival in Japan.

disabled community.

For ten years Donna sought an independent way of life for herself. She found a job, home, and a circle of supportive friends that would allow her to pursue the dream of her own television program.

One of her disabled friends was a counsellor for disabled students. She also was an access TV producer who, like many, are overcommitted. She wanted a way to discontinue producing the show.

Donna and another friend with TV production experience agreed to provide the technical crew if Donna would take over as host of the show and get talent lined up.

It was a match made in heaven. Donna signed the contract with **Cupertino Community TV** and ...whoa!

Before the ink was dry, her friend had to drop out due to a death in the family. Donna rounded up ten more friends to take

See On the Move, page 17...

Talking with the Host

Interview by Howard Davis

CMR: What are the most satisfying aspects of your involvement in *On the Move*?

Donna Yeager: Certainly, the opportunity to help the disabled community, speak for them, and inform the general public about issues relevant to all people with disability.

I have become a well-known speaker as a result of public access producing and hosting. I meet people everywhere who have seen our public access show. They say they appreciate the show and feel they know me because they watch the show all the time. Many thank me because of our coverage of issues that affect them personally.

I have felt very rewarded when hearing of the impact *On the Move* has made on some families' lives. Some have shared how they located helpful devices that changed their disabled child's life due to our informative show content.

The impact on some viewers is so dramatic that they want to be regular production crew members after seeing the show.

CMR: Please explain the extent of your opportunities to advocate for the community of disabled persons as a result of access.

Donna Yeager: Directly resulting from my show, I have become a public speaker for the rights of the disabled and attended several international conferences. In 1995 I was invited by Japan to represent the disabled population of the U.S. at the **International Conference on Media For Persons With Disabilities**.

A special honor for me was to be keynote speaker at the **Annual Toastmasters Conference**. They presented me an award as the **International Media Spokesperson of the Year**.

I am fully employed at **Hewlett**
See Talking with the Host, page 23...

Easter Seals Ability Hour

Shedding Light on Post Polio Syndrome

by Paula Manley

Extrême fatigue, pain, muscle weakness, and slow recovery from illness and trauma. These are symptoms of the late effects of polio which affect 75 to 80 percent of the 1.6 million polio survivors in the U.S.

"It's very frightening for people to experience these symptoms and not know what it is," says **Sheila Maxwell**, Easter Seals Post Polio Coordinator in Portland, Oregon. Thanks to her public access television series, Maxwell is now able to provide critical information to many polio survivors and medical professionals throughout the state.

The late effects of polio—also known as Post Polio Syndrome—develop approximately 35 years after the onset of polio. Because most doctors practicing today have never seen a case of polio, the late effects of polio are often misdiagnosed.

Maxwell was looking for ways to increase public awareness about Post Polio Syndrome when she discovered public access television five years ago. She heard a talk at an **Optimist Club** meeting and signed up for training at **Tualatin Valley Community Access** in Beaverton, OR. "I hadn't operated anything more than an instamatic camera," she recalls, "but once I got into the hands-on training, I gained confidence."

Maxwell feels strongly that public access television provides opportunities for people with disabilities. "Getting involved with TVCA has been a wonderful experience for me," she says. "I've learned a great deal and I'm still learning a lot every time we do a program. I would encourage anyone with a physical disability to get involved. Most of the positions, particularly in the studio, can be done when you're sitting down...such as the character generator, audio or even

running a studio camera."

After producing the *Easter Seals Post Polio Program* for two years, Maxwell changed the name of the series to the *Easter Seals Ability Hour* to reflect inclusion of program topics of interest to a

broader audience. Recent programs have included information about the **Americans with Disabilities Act**, social security and disability income, and vocational rehabilitation.

Today,

with the help of a highly motivated volunteer crew, Maxwell continues to produce the series at TVCA studios. A medical advisory board, including four physicians, two physical therapists and a dietitian, help to develop content for the series and present information on camera.

Maxwell's commitment to educating others about Post Polio Syndrome is rooted in her own experience. As a teenager, she was a championship figure skater when polio struck. "When it happened, it appeared that I had the flu," she recalls. "Within 24 hours I had paralysis in my legs and my left arm. So it hits very rapidly....It changed my life dramatically at that time."

After spending two years in leg braces and crutches, Maxwell resumed full use of her legs. She went on to enjoy a successful and varied career which included working as a banker, an independent businesswoman, and an economic development consultant to the **Navajo Nation**.

Maxwell's own bout with the late

effects of polio became evident as she experienced an unusually long recovery period following surgery. Her desire to return to work on a part-time basis coincided with Easter Seals' opening for a part-time Post Polio Program Coordinator.

Developing and distributing the public access series has been an important vehicle for getting the word out about Post Polio Syndrome. "We've had a good response," she says. "Many callers want to know when the program will be on again, where they can get a copy of a particular program, or how they can get a doctor's phone number."

Says Maxwell, "I get a lot of calls from people who say, 'What the doctor or physical therapist was talking about...those are just the problems I've been having. My doctor doesn't seem to know what's wrong with me.... and I'm so relieved that I've finally found somewhere I can get information.'"

As interest in the series has grown, Maxwell has made arrangements to have dubs of the program available for checkout in local libraries. In addition, copies are distributed to other access centers so that cable television viewers in

"...once I got into the hands-on training, I gained confidence."

many areas of the state can tune in. "I feel very good

about being able to reach a lot of people who are going through these problems with post polio and not knowing where to get help until they see this program," Maxwell says. "I know we're making a difference."

Paula Manley is Executive Director of Tualatin Valley Community Access, a community media center serving 16 communities west of Portland, Oregon. She can be reached at 1815 NW 169th Place, Suite 6020, Beaverton, OR 97006. Phone: (503) 629-8534. Email: pmanley@teleport.com. Sheila Maxwell can be reached at the Easter Seal Society of Oregon, 5757 SW Macadam Avenue, Portland, OR 97201. Phone: (503) 228-5108 or 1-800-556-6020 (Oregon only).

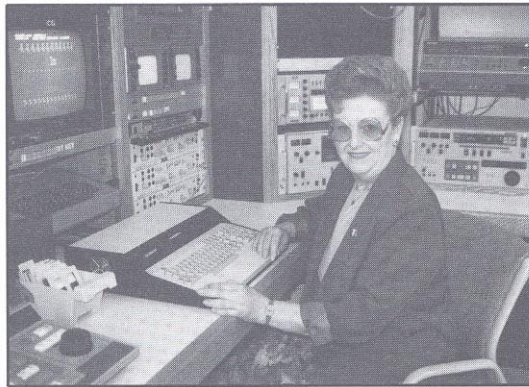


Photo by Paula Manley

Sheila Maxwell, producer of the Easter Seals Ability Hour, adds some finishing touches to her program in the Tualatin Valley Community Access control room.

From VHS to National Acclaim ...And Still Climbing

by Howard Davis

Like so often happens in our lives, dramatic events alter our course in ways we never could have anticipated. To my great amazement, disability in our family has hurt and changed our family, but has also enriched our lives.

...And Still Climbing was the name of the video I produced in 1993 at **Portland Cable Access** and **Multnomah Community Television** about my son **Benjamin's** struggle with autism. But it is also appropriate for all of us who are climbing with him, because his disability has challenged us who love him as much as it has Benjamin.

Benjamin and community television have been transforming influences. That I would become a television producer at age 45 as a result of my son's autism would have been unthinkable ten years ago. But as I have learned as a minister, God has mysterious ways....

Perhaps this story will give a clue to what can happen if you try to help others understand a disability through the use of the wonderful opportunities of community television.

No Autism Documentary Available. When our only son Benjamin was diagnosed with autism on his third birthday January 19, 1990, we could not find one documentary video of an actual child with autism in the United States.

To many, learning that your child has autism is devastating. In our case, my wife felt that at least we now had an explanation after the years of Benjamin's screaming all night and uncontrollable tantrums everywhere.

Although significant breakthroughs were beginning to emerge for treating young children with autism by 1990, the documentation was very sparse. Finding out about our options and piecing together a treatment program was compli-

cated. It was guesswork based as much on hope, faith, and love as it was good science.

We noted that there was no video

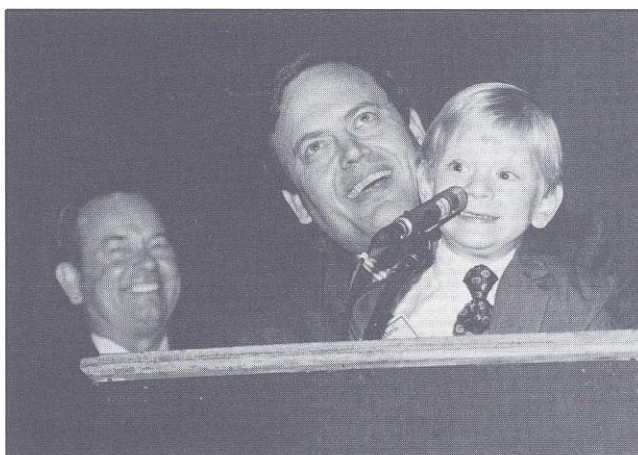


Photo courtesy American Film Institute

"I want to thank God and thank you for giving my dad this award so I could go to Disneyland and ride the Matterhorn," proclaimed Benjamin (at podium with his father) at the American Film Institute ceremonies.

record which we could find of any child during speech and physical therapy, in developmental preschools, or actually attempting to fit into a family setting.

Through a massive intervention program which transformed my life, Benjamin got better, and we recorded aspects of his progress on a home VHS camcorder as we went along—his classroom with severely developmentally disabled children, his speech therapies, his physical therapies, his life at home, his first words at three and a half years, his early attempts at sports, his hiking up mountains, swimming lessons, crying, hugging.

We had purchased the camcorder to go to Austria and Germany when Benjamin was a baby. After examining the many hours of family life footage shot before Benjamin's diagnosis, we could see the signs of autism were there, documented unknowingly at the time of camcording his part of our family

members' lives.

Access to Help Opens Horizons. By age five, Benjamin made spectacular gains from his severe autism. He had been diagnosed as having severe disability, 144 of 160 traits possible under the Oregon educational assessment for autism. I felt it was important to give back to the community what we had been given, our story of Benjamin. As far as I knew, we had a unique video record of his descent into the disability, how he had made progress, and what had happened to our lives. Perhaps it could help other parents, relatives, and the community awareness of autism.

With the inspiration and encouragement of a deacon in the congregation who is a producer at Portland Cable Access, I took classes to tell the story of Benjamin's progress. I chose a documentary *cinema verité* form using our many hours of footage of Benjamin, the family, the therapists and our perceptions as parents. It took a year to learn the equipment, edit, and produce. It cost only \$1500 including a new Hi-8 Camcorder.

When it was cablecast in Portland, we got many calls. The station decided to use it for filler material and it was frequently played for over a year. Oregon's largest newspaper, *The Oregonian*, did a major two-page article about Benjamin.

I sent a copy to Los Angeles to see if I could win a free camcorder in Sony's annual national contest for home video productions. Instead, I got a call from the **American Film Institute** in Hollywood which urged me to enter *...And Still Climbing* in the national **Bennett Award** competition for documentary television. Even though it was up against network affiliates and PBS stations nationwide, it won in 1994.

Benjamin and I went to Hollywood in February 1994 for the ceremony where Benjamin brought the house down when he said to the overflow audience "I want to

See *And Still Climbing*, page 20...

"...we had a unique video record of his descent into the disability, how he had made progress, and what had happened to our lives."

A Personal Account

My Access Produces My Story

by Robert E. Shoults

Let me start by telling you a little about myself. I am a 32-year-old male with a moderate case of Cerebral Palsy, that affects my left arm, legs, eyes and back. I am able to walk without any device but disability impacted my life before encountering community access in many ways, especially my sense of belonging.

After working at **Burr Brown Scientific** on an assembly line in July of 1988, I noticed my mom watching a live call-in show called *You're the Expert* on one of **Tucson Community Cable Corporation's (TCCC)** channels. We had subscribed to cable for over a year when I became interested in an access call-in show called *Audio Files*. I called into this live program to find out

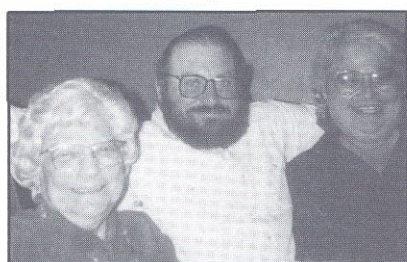


Photo courtesy Sandee Brooke
Three generations of access producers: Robert E. Shoults sits between his grandmother Shullie Eisenberg (left), and her daughter (his mother) Sandee Brooke (right).

how to come down and see what was happening on the production end of these shows. While I was talking to the host live on the air, he relayed a message from a crew member asking me what time he could pick me up the following night to tour the facility. It turned out to be a friend of my mother's from the University of Arizona. Access truly had brought people together in new and interesting ways!

Finding Life's Work. Mark picked me up the following night, signed me up as a member and changed my life dramatically. The first thing I noticed was that I was not treated any differently than anybody else at the studio. This acceptance, the sense of belonging, kept me coming back. After attending all the classes to be certified to work all the equipment, I realized that I was a "natural" for video. A professional sense of composition and framing came as second nature in my camera work, as did directing in the control room, editing, and all other production responsibilities. At one point I worked on eighteen different programs, mostly as director.

At another point I began taking college classes in video production

because I had found my life's work. In October 1991, I applied for a part-time Production Assistant opening at TCCC. I was hired and told that both the job and position were temporary as a trial situation. Within two weeks after employment, both were made permanent. In 1993 my job was made full-time.

Goals, Dreams, and Freedom.

Professionally, cable access has made it possible to find my life's work. Now I have two major goals as a Disability Advocate.

First, I want to become a consultant to show nonprofit organizations dealing with the disabled how anybody can run any piece of equipment. Believe it or not, a blind person can run a studio camera if shown where the controls are and they understand commands from the director.

My second goal is to build my own

audio/video studio employing seventy-five to eighty percent disabled. I know that I will achieve both goals if I work hard enough.

Public access television is something anybody can do whether or not they have a disability. It is immensely rewarding helping others to communicate effectively. But in my case, it was the key to understanding that I don't have to worry about always finding new jobs that don't fit my abilities because of being labeled "disabled." Now I am more fortunate than many who never have experienced the challenges of disability and never had job security which flows from passion for the profession and expertise on the job.

Not only my life's work, I have also found freedom. Freedom from arbitrary limiting labels, from insecurity, and dependence. In my case, access has enabled me to produce my most important program—my own life.

Robert Shoults is a Production Assistant at Access Tucson in Tucson, Arizona. He enjoys country western dancing and billiards (when he can escape the access center).

Bridges

by Sandee Brooke

Early in 1989, my son Rob and I decided to have cable installed. After a few months, we were pleasantly surprised to find so many fine productions on **Tucson Community Cable Corporation (TCCC)**, our local public access station.

While watching an after-hours program, I heard familiar laughter. Friends of mine from the **University of Arizona** were producing a program. I called in and suddenly voices off camera started yelling, "Is that Sandee? Why aren't you here?"

Rob called, asking where the station was located. Within a week, he was deeply involved with TCCC. He had found his life's work. Through public access television, he has bloomed, producing a wide variety of programs and editing every kind of award-winning video imaginable. Now, as a staff member, he advises other producers.

Six months after that first phone call, I became involved through a friend producing *Good Evening Viet Nam!*, a program by and for Viet Nam veterans about the health problems resulting from their service. He recognized the need for programming "by, for and about" the general disability community.

He discussed the the concept with me, said I should host the show, telling me, "You can do it, you talk to everyone!" So by January 1989, I was on camera. This January 29 will be *Bridges'* seventh anniversary on cable.

When we began, *Bridges* aired at 10:00 on Sunday evenings, but since then we have shifted the time to 3:00 Sunday afternoon. It is easier to get guests to come to the station since the **City/County Arts Council** has created a shopping and art gallery precinct around the studio. The area has become filled with avant garde cafe and coffee shops. The guests now call me!

See *Bridges*, page 15...

I CAN, YOU CAN

by Anna Herr

My name is Anna Herr. I am learning disabled because I have a mental illness and I had a

severe back injury. I mentally stopped growing at the age of six and accepted myself as retarded. People kept telling me I was retarded, so, I accepted what everyone said. I stopped trying to learn.

I was trained at Milwaukee Access Telecommunications Authority (MATA) public access in 1987. Before MATA my thoughts got lost because I never tried to write. With production, I was able to use the buttons and equipment to put my ideas in place. MATA gave me the technology

to have my ideas communicated. After that, I felt more confident about building other skills. Because when I was in school, they did not know a lot about different

kinds of disabilities.

During my training, people drew diagrams for me and they were kind and patient. If MATA had not been around, I do not think I would be where I am today.

Now I have done eight productions. I met and interviewed public personalities like Jerry Taff, an ABC affiliate news anchor. Jerry was

talent on one of my shows and I got him to host an award ceremony for MATA. I have also volunteered for the Milwaukee Mental Health

Association. I have my drivers license and I am doing great!

I did my first show on Bellwood LTD, a clinic that supports mentally ill persons living on their own. Bellwood LTD is a residential treatment center. I did a program for teenagers' mental health. Some of my programs were polka shows or music entertainment.

I got other people with mental illness involved. Some of the others did at least one show. I found public access television by accident, but I fell in love with it. I was the first mentally ill person trained by MATA. I received all of the training including studio.

I do not live in the city right now, but I visit MATA a lot. I love MATA because it helped to change my life. I think people with mental illness should see one or more psychological therapist, but also have public access to help you improve. These are the two things that made a difference in my life. Now I have a good life.



Photo courtesy Anna Herr

Left, Jerry Taff, ABC affiliate news anchor, Anna Herr, MATA producer, Marty Burns Wolf, ABC affiliate news anchor.

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American Television and the Demographics of Disability

Continued from page 8

pointless to quantify it, the scale of our disabled population must be appreciated to understand the potential of media to more accurately portray its nature in American life.

Disease of the Week Stereotypes. There are hundreds of disabilities. Some are congenital and disenable mental or communication functions like retardation, autism, or cerebral palsy. Who ever saw a sitcom or movie dealing with cerebral palsy?

Have you seen any realistic treatment in dramatic or documentary form, or a first-person extended discussion interview about the three-to-five million learning disabled persons in America? Not much. Maybe an item here or there, a bit on the news magazine, but not much.

As a microcosm of disability, consider autism and its treatment in the media. This is the one rare instance that a disability has been considerably portrayed in the media in the last five years, probably because of its mystical association with occasional brilliant splinter skill traits of genius—like winning at blackjack in Las Vegas as **Dustin Hoffman** portrayed in **Rainman**. Since the days of the American circus, media has always had a niche for “freak” show curiosity.

Such video reductionism doesn't do the autistic person much good. Nor the American public awareness.

There are 250,000 persons with autism in the U.S. Together they would make up a city larger than Pasadena, California. Yet 70% of Americans with autism over 30 years old are institutionalized at a cost of over \$30,000 a year on one form or another of government funding. Compared to rock stars, rap singers, or professional basketball players, American media has no time for autism. Because autism is a disability, and these others are fun.

Smaller in population than Down syndrome, autism has gotten far more dramatic attention than Down syndrome in terms of major characterizations in the disease-of-the-week primetime-for-network movies. But almost always these dramatic

works have shown families and “normal” people plunging into a tragedy. Relationships fall apart with one of the parents becoming crazy, obsessive, or so depressed that sustaining meaningful relationships is impossible. Virtually never does the family persevere after years of difficulty, adjust, and come out stronger. Or even coping. Yet in real life, many families with autism stay together, a trait that is increasing uncommon among marriages in the “normal” population.

More tragic is the real-life impact of this television treatment. An autistic person has never been dramatized as

succeeding in anything in America's fictional television or movies. Would you be the first in your neighborhood to hire an autistic person after watching?

Many of these stereotypes are fictions. They further entrench already ingrained aversion to the disabled. But now autistic persons are succeeding. And with real-life drama, the new population of autistic children growing up with massive early intervention, many are emerging living nearly typical lives.

Did you know that? If you did, you probably didn't learn it from television.

Even Dustin Hoffman's portrayal, sensitive and accurate as the professional critics love to think it is, has come to be a noose around the public's neck in choking off public awareness of autism's current realities, many autism activists believe.

Market Potential for Disability Programming. Only

“Public access producers who tell the story of the disabled well often get tremendous and sympathetic responses from the community.”

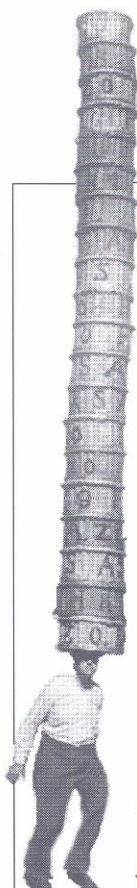
occasionally do we get glimpses of the market potential for programming that treats the disabled realistically.

We can only get a clue from isolated anecdotes. For instance, the response to a Sunday edition newspaper ad which had a Down syndrome child used as a typical model for a product stunned the executives of the Minneapolis-based **Target** department store chain. The ad with the child was only one small picture in the midst of dozens of others in the circular, but it generated over two thousand letters of thanks, recounts **NO PITY** author Shapiro.

Public access producers who tell the story of the disabled well often get tremendous and sympathetic responses from the community. It is here that one of the great potentials exist for access to fill a niche unoccupied by anyone else in American media. Several types of programming, in fact all genre, can be used to inform and inspire audiences of the “abled” community, as well as bring hope, information, representation, and entertainment to the disabled community.

The demographics of American disability certainly support a wide open potential for access and community television producers and administrators to fulfill. It's up to us to make it happen.

Howard Davis is Co-Editor-In-Chief of this issue of CMR.



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Bridges

Continued from page 12

Bridges was the only reliable TV coverage in Tucson during the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** debates. My first co-host, **Mike Landwehr**, brought news from ADA champions around the country, discussed the need to lobby our legislators and how the disability community could help. Some opponents of the bill wanted to exclude persons with HIV/AIDS and eliminate modification of trains and airplanes for accessibility, so our work was cut out for us.

Bridges is a liaison between local governments and the disability community, including changes in our convention center's ADA compliance remodeling and in eligibility for the **Para-Transit** system.

The co-host with me longest is **Amanda Kopplin**, who was interested in increasing driving safety awareness. She produced a series of **Bridges** programs called **Prevention of Disabilities**.

The **Tucson Police and Fire Departments** have been on the show. We were able to contact the first woman Safety Officer for Tucson, **Kathy Cordova**, soon after she assumed her position early in 1993. She helped us do

many traffic safety programs including holiday safe driving messages, "Don't Drink and Drive" programs, bicycle safety, fire prevention, hazardous materials safety, Tucson Police Department's **El Protector** program (a special outreach project for Hispanic kids!), a pedestrian safety show, an infant car seat loan project, and the school bus seat belt issue.

Access Tucson/TCCC made many changes so the facilities are as accessible as possible. For example, there is now an automatic entry door with a pressure switch opener, a change often resisted. After the new power doors had been installed, I was delighted to watch the same members who fought most vigorously against the power door use it most often to go in or out with the heavy video camera equipment.

Bridges and local organizations resolved an accessibility problem at a local mall which had no automatic doors. Within a few weeks after our proposed boycott was conveyed to mall management, two power doors were installed at different entrances. Now we are working on the anchor stores to increase accessibility.

Much of the legislative groundwork is done. We are now facing the age-old problem, acceptance. ADA is a two-edge sword; the entire community needs to be aware that one may not expect special treatment and a level playing field at the same time. Access television is the most promising venue for the disability community to express opinions and viewpoints. It offers a soapbox to anyone who has an idea. It is up to us to share what we have, and continue expanding exposure on public access television.

Sandee Brooke is a special needs clothing designer, retired by disability, and a dedicated disability rights advocate and public access producer at Access Tucson.

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Involving the Deaf Community Eye Understand

by Dr. Jerry Seale

Community Television of Knoxville can be described in a plethora of ways from "opportunity for community awareness" to simply "public access." However, when we consider its impact on the deaf and hearing impaired community, we have to celebrate some of the descriptions between those two mentioned extremes. One of the words that is used to describe Community Television of Knoxville is "grassroots," and that adjective becomes the threshold to understanding the impact this medium has had on the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

Over the past eighteen years there has been a dramatic change in the American deaf community and scene. There has been the "outcry" from deaf people to take more responsibility for their own destiny. This "outcry" has been evidenced in every venue of the deaf person's life; from education (residential vs. mainstreaming) to politics (the *Deaf President Now*

campus rebellion at Gallaudet University) and even in religion (from the interpreted worship service to a self-perpetuating deaf worship service). Media, too, has played a role in this revolution; from a television which had very little to offer the deaf community to captioning and self-produced programming. What this has meant is an indigenous philosophy of understanding which has defined the deaf community more accurately, given deaf people more dignity, and a greater sense of control over the events that directly affect them.

Community Television of Knoxville has been one element in this chain of events which has encouraged such a rise to self actualization.

Community Television of Knoxville has given the opportunity to our deaf community to produce relevant programs which have a specific impact on this community. CTV has also provided the training and opportunity to air religious programming which has been generated by deaf people entirely, from the performing, cameras and editing to the delivery for

cablecasting. This means three things. First, it means that there is a medium that is community relevant. Second, this deaf community is watching these programs because they have some personal vested interest in what is being cablecast. Third, these programs reflect more accurately the needs of the community, even when they may be contradictory to the "rules of good television." "Good rules of Television" may not be accurate for such a defined ethnic or culturally diverse group as the deaf (for example, our religious program does not give much priority to sound, since the generators and the recipients do not value the dimension).

Other community television organizations need to actively solicit this group. Deaf communities need to know the value of the impact which this medium can make. I would recommend that more attention be given this category of interest and diversity in every community. Such a visually sensitive group would benefit from community television, and local systems and organizations would be well advised to consider its use for the benefit of their own community.

Dr. Jerry Seale produces the deaf service access program for First Baptist Church at Community Television of Knoxville.

"...these programs reflect more accurately the needs of the community, even when they may be contradictory to the 'rules of good television.'"

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On the Move with Donna Yeager

Continued from page 9

over the show's technical production. After three extended sessions at Cupertino, three people stayed and the rest drifted away.

The access director's willingness to work with us was stretched thin after so few trainees followed through, but he agreed to train one more group. Donna drew together an unlikely combination: my wife Jeanne, a personnel executive, a director of

manufacturing of television cameras, a maintenance foreman for **United Airlines**, an unemployed computer design specialist, a bookkeeper from the local medical clinic—and me!

That was 1988. Now we have about 20 regulars who come to help with the studio most of the time. Another 20 or so drop in occasionally. Eighty more are available to respond if we call for help. With 125 volunteers associated with a public access television series, we are responsible to deliver programming that has impact.

And *On the Move* does have impact. It flows from program content, like all good TV. What often intrigues an audience is a curiosity for the unusual, an intractable problem solved, hope and success for the popularly perceived underdog. And what more unusual subject can there be in the public mind than the disabled succeeding in ways never thought possible.

Great Purposes & Great Programming. Our first program was terrible, but it showed us that it was possible to do television even through we didn't have degrees in production. Up front, we each decided make a commitment to a set of rules to which we would all adhere. Nothing too complicated, just what you might expect from a basic television textbook.

Our first rule is to always be consistent with our statement of purpose: *On the*

Move is a television series produced by and for the disabled people in the local community by promoting the understanding, awareness, and self-esteem of the physically challenged; for the relatives and friends who support the disabled; and for the general public to increase their awareness.

Our second rule is our statement of leadership with its clear division of responsibilities which developed as time went on: the host with the responsibility for topics and talent is Donna Yeager. Donna has a full time job at **Hewlett**

Packard as a dispatcher in the consumer response division. Donna's mother Jeanne is the primary writer and producer of the show. Technical operations and responsibility for studio direction at the beginning was **Rich Martinez**.

Rich was the only original crew member with television experience—but it was only in front of the camera. As a retired manager, I took on the trials and tribulations of forming the administration, distribution, and post-production efforts.

I created a production company called **ABLE CABLE PRODUCTIONS** which has received 501(c)(3) IRS status.

Our third rule is our statement of content: we all agree that our programs will contain only upbeat topics and describe the positive side of the disabled community. The style is documentary with one topic per program. Programs fall into three

categories: profiles of disabled people who have learned to cope with their disability; technological improvements which help disabled people live more comfortable lives; descriptions of vocations, avocations and recreational activities that disabled persons may enjoy and at which they may succeed.

Consider some *On the Move* titles and topics. *Trading Wheels for Wings* is about disabled persons who soar in gliders—on location. *Challenge at South Fork* shows persons without limbs, including Donna, fighting the whitewater of raging rapids of the south fork of the American River with camera and crew. *Vets and Nets* brings you on a deep-sea fishing trip with disabled persons having a great time hauling in big ones. In *Snow Fun*, watch disabled persons learn to snow ski proficiently by using a "mono-ski," a ingenious adaptation of ski and artificial limb technology.

With serendipity (I call her Sarah Dippity), we have found that the San Francisco Bay area is ideally located to

See *On the Move*, page 21...



Photo courtesy On the Move

Donna "hangs ten" while taping *Surfing for Disabled* at Santa Cruz's Club Ed, an accessible beach.

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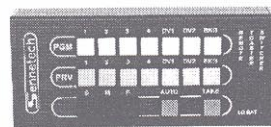
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Project VITAL

The Kiss My TV Show



Project VITAL is a unique training program in basic video production skills designed for people with developmental disabilities. Launched in 1985 by **Little City Foundation**, the VITAL curriculum is taught at community access television centers, giving people with developmental challenges the opportunity to make video alongside other access producers. Chicago-area VITAL graduates have served as crew members, hosts and guests of the monthly talk show *Wishes and Ideas* for over eight years. In 1995, *Wishes and Ideas* was reborn as *The Kiss My TV Show*, a video magazine program produced by a team of people with and without disabilities. Project VITAL graduate **Larry Alanis** has played a leading role in the development of *The Kiss My TV Show*.

by **Larry Alanis**

I started off taking the **Project VITAL** course in the summer of 1993. After completing the course, I was on the crew of *Wishes and Ideas*. I operated a studio camera, an audio mixer, a switcher, and I was also a guest and a host.

In 1995, we began *The Kiss My TV Show*. Instead of being on the crew, I am now a co-producer and host of two segments which air every other month.

In my first segment, called *Window to the Movies*, I discuss movies as they relate to a specific theme. For example, in one episode I dealt with the controversial issue of whether today's violent movies have "destroyed society" as **Senator Dole** claims they have. I had movie critic **Dann Gire** of the **Daily Herald** as my guest and

we discussed *True Lies*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Natural Born Killers*. We both felt that the way violence is portrayed in movies is complicated. I personally felt *Natural Born Killers* made a powerful statement about the media's role in portraying violence in our society.

In my other segment, *Listen Up with Larry*, I invite people from the community to come into the studio to talk with me about their careers and interests. I've talked to a psychic, a guidance counselor and a **Jaycees** chapter president. I recently did my first on-

location shoot with the firefighters from the Elk Grove (IL) Township department.

What I enjoy most about my two segments is sharing my interests and my insights with other people through the medium of cable television. I hope someday I may be able to get into a career involving media and actually get paid for doing something I enjoy!



Photo courtesy Little City Foundation

Larry Alanis entered Project VITAL to become a crew member, and now hosts The Kiss My TV Show.

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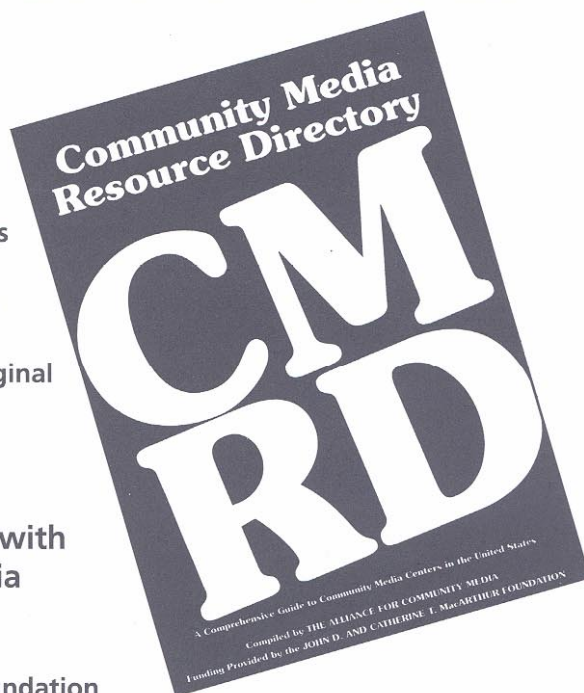
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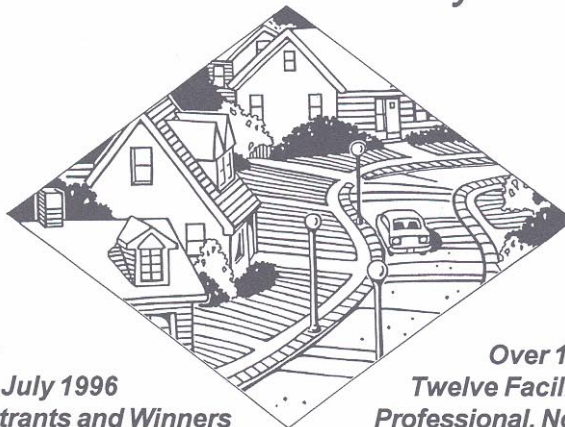
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...And Still Climbing

Continued from page 11

thank God and thank you for giving my dad this award so I could go to Disneyland and ride the Matterhorn."

Tipper Gore, the wife of the Vice President, sent a wonderful letter to Benjamin and me saying she loved the video and wished she could be at the award ceremony.

I got a call from the largest commercial network about doing a piece on Benjamin's case. After returning to Portland, Benjamin and I went on a special half-hour *Weekend News Conference* interview with a local news anchor at Portland's CBS affiliate. Benjamin was sensational and hilarious.

From various sources, I began receiving requests from all over the United States and the world for the video. Groups of doctors and parents in many states, Canada, Australia, England, Germany have used it, and none of these people could have benefited from our experience without community television. Hopefully, more can be encouraged as a result. A major Hollywood actor called me about his child with autism and would be interested in acting in any dramatization of the story. And a twice Oscar-nominated screenplay writer has signed a contract to do our story for Hollywood.

But access meant an opportunity to serve by making contributions on other issues. Having studied so much about young children's brain development, I was asked to do a video on contract for the **Oregon Department of Education** about autism. In a similar vein, I was asked to produce a video *Children at Risk: Television and Video* through a grant from the **U.S. Department of Education** in which parents are trained to understand how children's brains are manipulated by images, sounds, and story content. It was used by teachers in parent training throughout Washington state. This year I have been asked to do a media literacy project, again funded by the U.S. Department of Education, about media's impact

on sexuality and violence for nine-to-fourteen year olds. It will be used in classrooms of public school systems throughout Washington state.

From the substantial contract sums, I purchased a non-linear digital editing and graphics system, the same used by commercial networks and their affiliates. In only two years I have become a

producer and hands-on editor, purchased Hi-8 (and soon digital) cameras and am able to use my professional writing skills and background as a classical pianist.

All the above has made my most important work possible. In 1994, I began a weekly, *Northwest Tomorrow*, which is a one-hour high talk, high production value interview program styled like *Charlie Rose*, the nightly PBS program from New York. It was a dream come true to be able to explore the significant theological, biblical, and moral issues appealing to the mind, cutting to the core of many contemporary issues. It is now a significant part of our media work of the **United Church of God** in the Northwest, cablecasting in Seattle, Portland and soon most other cities in the Northwest and Northern California on access. All from attempting

to help others understand autism.

As a minister, I often struggle and ponder the significance of the words of **Jesus**. He was a friend of the disabled and told his disciples to seek the disabled for His Kingdom, for the "abled" were too busy and self-important to listen. In his famous parable of Luke 14:21, Jesus told of the great man to whose feast everyone "normal" was too busy to attend. So he said "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."

I have frequently said I believe Jesus would have used access television, along with the disabled, as much as any other media if His ministry were here now. Jesus recognized that the disabled often have the right sense of reality, whereas the "abled" do not.

And so it is with cable access. I hope to help more in communicating the unique contributions of the disabled among us. May we all become more "abled" by using this unique opportunity and medium. May we all be enriched and listen to the voices of the disabled as we learn from them. For in reality, we are all still climbing.

Howard Davis is a minister, writer and television producer in Portland, Oregon, with a professional background as an executive with a Fortune 500 company before his ministry.

"May we all be enriched and listen to the voices of the disabled as we learn from them."

Alliance on the Move

Continued from page 4

next door in their current building—expanded and renovated after their neighbors at the **National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB)** moved to San Francisco.

New staff members, new office space, and a new grant from the **MacArthur Foundation** (see article on page 5 of this *CMR*) all mean that the Alliance is moving onward and upward in 1996!

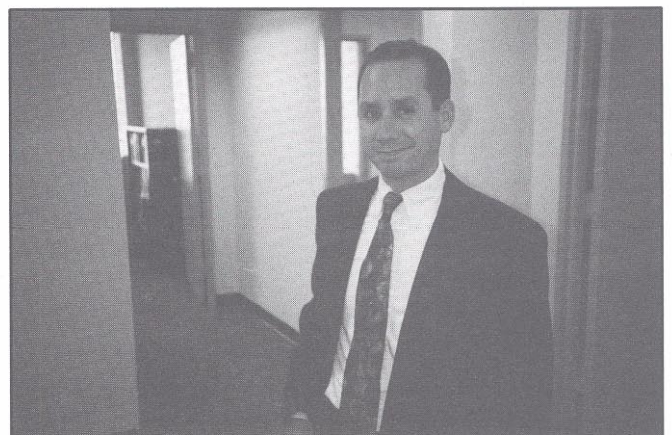


Photo by Jim Peters

Government Relations Director Jeffrey Hops on a tour of the Alliance for Community Media's new office.

On the Move

Continued from page 17

express the most forward-looking approaches to making a good life for the disabled. No other place we know of has so many people making breakthroughs in technology. Of course we are near a wonderful range of environments for action-packed programming.

Cure not Care documents the quest of carpenter **Nick Batinic** whose "normal" life was thought to end when a house he was razing collapsed on him. After being told he would be a

paraplegic for life, Nick insisted on keeping his body in shape in anticipation of a cure to his spinal injury.

We have done several shows which we call *Disability Expos*, where we cover the annual gathering of manufacturers and service providers demonstrating the latest technology for the disabled.

Six shows covered different aspects of assistance dogs. One of these documented the training of a puppy to become a guide dog for the blind. Another profiled the changed lives of recipients of canine companions. Most recently, we covered the ceremony when Donna received **Finney**, her assistance dog.

About Earthquakes showed how the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 affected the lives of eight disabled persons. Amazingly, our studio was disabled by the earthquake, but was back in commission five days later when we were previously scheduled for a taping (another visit from Sarah Dippity). The discussion with eight disabled people whose lives were impacted by the earthquake provided a fascinating insight into the unique challenges disabled persons have in order to be prepared for this kind of disaster. The program was on the air within seven days of the earthquake. Call-in response from the community indicated the discussion by our guests made a dramatically moving impact in the bay area.

Other programs spotlight service provider agencies for the disabled. *Bridge to Jobs* introduced the public to the agencies which connect job opportunities with the disabled. *Taxes* featured a local tax expert who described tax breaks for the disabled.

Tanks for the Memories documented a program for scuba diving for the disabled with great B-roll video from the Caribbean Cayman Islands.

Getting A Head at Stanford, was a cameo profile of a man whose skull had deteriorated so badly after repeated operations that he needed to have a prosthetic skull surgically implanted over half his brain. We interviewed him at **Stanford University** hospital before and after surgery about his life story. He had so many operations that he had to wear a helmet.

Programs like these show the drama, humor, and spirit of the

Continued on next page...

"Programs like these show the drama, humor, and spirit of the treasury of disabled individuals in our community."

Had Enough "Interactive" Hype?

A lot of hype and flash have been thrown around the last couple of years regarding interactive this and that, including the information superhighway, Internet, World Wide Web (WWW), interactive bulletin boards, etc.

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On the Move with Donna Yeager

Continued from previous page
treasury of disabled individuals in our community. The humor and joy disabled people express was capsulized in our program *Access to Comedy* where a group of comedians with different disabilities kept our crew in stitches throughout the program. In fact, we turned our crew of mostly disabled people into the audience for purposes of getting a rollicking live audience reaction to disabled comedians poking fun at disability situations and stereotypes. Two of these comedians have gone on to become nationally known professionals.

Surf for Disabled is about fixing a section of the beach in Santa Cruz for accessibility of the disabled. Watch two big balloon-tired wheelchairs take disabled people into the surf and tandem boards provide surfboard rides for disabled.

Benefit Baseball City Team Minis-tries covered a benefit baseball game between Bay Area television celebrities and the wives of the **San Francisco 49ers**.

Skydiving shot unique footage from a helmet-cam as a quadriplegic set a high altitude sky diving record for a disabled person.

The **Bay Area Association of Disabled Sailors** were featured in the show *BAAD SAILORS*. This show was about men and women sailors with many kinds of disability who operate three accessible sailboats on San Francisco Bay. This program won the 1995 Best Show for a special audience at the WAVE awards.

Awards and Production Facilities. *On the Move* succeeds because of its vision. Our whole plan is based on a maxim of supply-side television production and to paraphrase the words of **Shoeless Joe Jackson**: "Produce it and they will watch." From a clear sense of purpose, we have made a rewarding contribution. The

programs have also received numerous awards, grants, and contributions which make it possible to develop Donna's vision further.

We have been able to get grants for operating funds, for remote shooting equipment, for tape production cost, and the final coup d'état was a grant for a complete 3/4" edit facility. Possessing the equipment has enabled us to become independent from the scheduling demands of the studio. But as with everything in TV production, we always keep in mind the immortal words of wisdom from Rosanne Rosannadana: "ITS

ALWAYS SOMETHING!"

Of course as Donna's parents, Jeanne and I have been pleased with Donna's success and awards. There has never been a year since *On the Move* began in which

it didn't win an award of

some sort. With a

sense of appreciation for Donna's life, we have watched her

become an American and international

spokesperson for the disabled.

Donna was asked to represent the United States in 1993 at the **Wotobashi International Music Festival** on a tour of Japan. She and four other members of the **On the Move Band** gave nine concerts during a three week tour joined by groups from 15 other countries. She'll remember the experience for the rest of her life.

The Vision Pays Off. *On the Move* still has a lot of work to do because we know the results are but a mustard seed. Most Americans are yet unaware of the enormous and positive potential of our disabled people.

But without a doubt, *On the Move* has proven that there is great purpose for the use of access and community television by—and for—the disabled.

May the rewards multiply. Disabled people feel better about themselves. Many learn of new services, equipment, treatments, sports opportunities, and lifestyle changes they had never heard of or explored before. The rest of us understand more of our disabled neighbors. And we are all inspired to see the spirit and tremendous strength of the ordinary disabled person.

Don Yeager is a retired 32-year veteran, former Naval Wing Commander for NATO and was Director of Inspections for the U.S. Navy Inspector General. Mr. Yeager holds a masters in Economic Analysis and Financial Management and is a former Associate Professor at the University of California, Berkeley.

"...we are all inspired to see the spirit and tremendous strength of the ordinary disabled person."

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Talking with the Host

Continued from page 9

Packard. I have spoken to many corporations for the **United Way**, representing HP, and for the whole disabled community.

I speak to large and small groups of educators, businessmen, and many school children. I particularly enjoy assisting in workshops where people with disabilities visit and help children accept and understand that we are just like anyone else.

CMR: You often talk about teamwork and friends at access television. Tell us your experience and perspective.

Donna Yeager: Friendships and contacts as a result of my connection with producing and hosting a public access show can be hard to summarize in a short article. All of the crew members and past guests are invited to yearly parties, picnics and special events. Being part of a television project helps promote teamwork and self esteem. It has provided me with a network of friends to be able to share common goals, interests and challenges. And everyone is

always on the lookout for future shows and guests to be interviewed.

Members of our crew from college days are part of our board of directors and take turns serving as crew every other Monday night in the studio. Some have been helping for over eight years as crew or some capacity in pre- or post-production.

Amazing friendships have resulted from contacts with our show. When I met **Dan Guillian**, he was the **Easter Seals Adult of the Year**, and we featured his life story. Since that time, he has participated in several shows with *On the Move* including the *Americans with Disabilities Act Update*, plus our *Beach Day for the*

Disabled to go surfing and kayaking at Santa Cruz, California.

There are so many people—with and without disability—who I count as friends that it is not possible to give justice to them here.

But just one example of crew participation turning into a rewarding friendship is

one crew member who has become a close friend and confidant. We do a lot of things together. She was injured by a drive-by shooter, and became paralyzed from the spinal cord injury when the bullet punctured and injured her back.

There are so many stories. And each story involves people, wonderful people. That's why *On the Move* is so fulfilling for us and our audience.

CMR: What opportunities may there be for you in the future?

Donna Yeager: Because of my contacts and experiences with interviewing for the show, I am being considered for a New York talk show as hostess on an "Oprah type" show. Who can really say? But what is important to me is our philosophy expressed in my favorite saying: "The time to be happy is now, the place to be happy is here, and the way to be happy is to make others so..."

CMR: With *On the Move*, the success of your philosophy is apparent. Thank you, Donna.

Howard Davis is Co-Editor-In-Chief of this issue of CMR.

Editorial Opportunities

Have a good idea for an issue of *CMR*? Want to get involved in the brainstorming of themes and selection of submissions? Contribute articles or graphics—or be Editor-in-Chief of your very own issue?

If you've answered yes to any of these questions, then you need to get involved in the **Alliance Editorial Board**, which manages the content and production of *Community Media Review*.

Members attend one one-hour conference call meeting each month to contribute ideas, suggestions, and enthusiasm. Your next step might be to make a few phone calls to help out with an issue. After that, you might want to be Editor-in-Chief of your own issue of *CMR*!

If you have some creativity you would like to contribute, contact Editorial Board Chair **Dirk Koning** at (616) 459-4788 ext. 101. Fax: (616) 459-3970 ext. 123; e-mail: dirk@grcmc.org

Correction

In the last issue, 'Olelo: The Corporation for Community Television was listed in a sidebar as having the web address of <http://hookomo.aloha.net/~ctpa/olelo/olelo.html>. This is actually a page created by the **Community Television Producers Association (CTPA)** as a link on their web site which is an unofficial and unauthorized site for 'Olelo. As of this date, 'Olelo has not created a web site. The credit for that site goes to the CTPA.

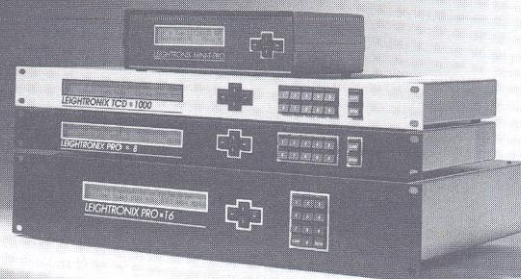
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Thanks to the generosity of many of your colleagues, the Alliance for Community Media has been successful in pushing our legislative agenda with Congress and in informing you of the results. But our work cannot stop here! The Alliance must now work with the FCC, monitor state legislation, and prepare for our First Amendment case before the Supreme Court! As you know, our current dues structure cannot support an ongoing public policy program. Please join the Public Policy Council by contributing \$2,500 or more, or join the Public Policy Network for \$500. In the meantime, please thank your colleagues who have made our public policy efforts possible:

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